

The Impact of Tobacco Use



The Food and Drug Administration's Center for Tobacco Products, established in June 2009 by the Family Smoking Prevention and Tobacco Control Act, offers the United States a powerful new regulatory tool to make tobacco-related disease and death part of America's past, not its future. While there has been significant progress, the facts and figures below illustrate that tobacco use remains a major problem in the United States—one that FDA is working hard to help reduce.

Health Effects of Tobacco Use

Tobacco has serious effects on the health of users. For example, smoking harms nearly every organ in the body and leads to premature death.¹ The consequences of tobacco use threaten Americans in many ways, including the following:

- The adverse health effects from tobacco use cause more than 480,000 deaths each year in the United States.¹
- Smoking is a major cause of cardiovascular disease, which is the single leading cause of death in the United States. Smoking causes 1 of every 3 deaths from cardiovascular disease.²
- Smoking increases the risk for stroke. Deaths from stroke are more likely among smokers than among former smokers or people who have never smoked.²
- In the United States, 1 of every 3 cancer deaths is linked to smoking.³ Smoking can cause cancer nearly anywhere in the body, including the lungs, oral cavity, stomach, bladder, kidney, uterine cervix, colon and rectum, and liver. The Surgeon General reports have identified at least 12 cancers caused by smoking.³
- Smoking is a cause of type 2 diabetes. More than 25 million adults in the United States suffer from diabetes. Smokers who have diabetes are more likely to have serious health problems, including heart and kidney disease, poor blood flow in the legs and feet that can lead to foot infections and other problems, and retinopathy (an eye disease that can cause blindness).⁴
- Nearly 8 in 10 cases of chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) are caused by smoking. The number of Americans suffering from COPD is increasing, and there is no cure.⁵
- Tobacco use remains the leading preventable cause of death and disease in the United States.¹

Youth and Tobacco

Most tobacco use begins during adolescence. Because many of today's young smokers will continue to be regular users when they are adults, the impact of early tobacco use is serious and far-reaching.⁶ For example:

- Nearly 9 out of 10 adult daily smokers smoked their first cigarette by the age of 18.¹
- Young brains are still developing. That may be one reason many teens feel dependent on tobacco after using it for only a short time.⁶ Because of nicotine addiction, 3 out of 4 teen smokers will become adult smokers, even if they intend to quit after a few years.⁷



- Even young adults under the age of 30 who started smoking in their teens and early twenties can develop smoking-related health problems, such as early cardiovascular disease, smaller lungs that don't function normally, wheezing that can lead to being diagnosed with asthma, or DNA damage that can cause cancer almost anywhere in the body.⁶

Secondhand Smoke

There is no safe level of exposure to secondhand smoke.^{8,9} Even low levels of secondhand smoke can harm children and adults in many ways, including the following:

- The U.S. Surgeon General estimates that living with a smoker increases a nonsmoker's chances of developing lung cancer by 20 to 30 percent.⁸
- Exposure to secondhand smoke increases school children's risk for ear infections, lower respiratory illnesses, more frequent and more severe asthma attacks, and slowed lung growth, and it can cause coughing, wheezing, phlegm, and breathlessness.^{8,9}
- Secondhand smoke causes more than 40,000 deaths a year.¹

Pregnancy and Smoking

Smoking before, during, and after pregnancy can affect the baby's health.¹⁰ Smoking in pregnancy has been linked to a number of serious health effects, such as the following:

- Pregnant women who smoke are at a higher risk of pregnancy complications, such as preterm labor and delivery.¹¹
- Infants born to mothers who smoked during pregnancy are at a higher risk of low birth weight, lungs that don't develop in a normal way, and sudden infant death syndrome.^{1,8}
- Smoking reduces fertility in women.¹

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